



# SOCIALIST VOICE

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## The teachers need support

**AFTER** many years of “social partnership” and all the talk about workers having more say in the companies they work for and having a greater input into Government policies, the teachers are having a rude awakening from this particular illusion.

All the teachers’ unions—like the majority of public sector unions—have been the backbone of this strategy of pay restraint; live, horse, and you’ll get grass has been the overriding view of the leading officers of all these unions. Now many workers in the public sector have begun to question what this strategy has delivered to them.

Teachers who are members of the ASTI are now in the firing line over their pay demands. It is clear that there is little or no public sympathy for their cause. That of itself does not mean that they have not got a case—they clearly have. Teachers have overseen many changes in the curriculum in the last decade, many for the better. The education system has become more pupil-friendly; but still the emphasis is on exam results, which is taking a heavy toll on both pupils and teachers.

Despite the Government’s claim that it has a back-up scheme for supervising and correcting this year’s Leaving Cert examination, its strategy is clearly in disarray, if it had a strategy in the first place. The other teachers’ unions are not going to cooperate, and it is very doubtful if the Department of Education could get the three thousand examiners that are required; it is equally doubtful whether they could get enough graduates or retired teachers and civil servants to do the job. The Government is attempting to bully the teachers by using public pressure to achieve its goal.

It is clear that the ASTI is making a tactical error in not taking into account the serious pressure caused by their decision not to exempt the Junior and Leaving Cert exams from the strike days. The amount of good will and public support this would bring them would make it extremely difficult for the Government not to concede and find a working solution to the teachers’ demands; it would turn the pupils and parents into a lever against the Government, rather than the other way round.

Another way in which all the teachers’ unions could

bring additional pressure on the Government, and also bring greater equity into the Leaving Cert exam, would be to instruct their members to withdraw from the grind schools. These schools are creating an inequitable system within the education system as a whole: they are providing greater access to those who can afford it or whose parents and community have a strong culture of attaining a third-level education. So those who can afford to send their children to grind schools during the days of strike action are at an advantage over pupils whose family may not have the surplus income necessary to avail of the extra tutoring that the grind schools provide.

### The battle for the future of the trade union movement is hotting up

The Civil and Public Services Union voted by 3 to 1 to reject the 2 per cent pay increase plus 1 per cent lump sum offered by the Government and other employers as compensation for inflation. The CPSU has 12,000 members—mainly lower-paid civil servants. This is another union that has been central to the ICTU leadership’s strategy of partnership with the Government, which has resulted in a low-wage or pay restraint strategy in the public sector. The union will now be balloting for strike action when the foot-and-mouth crisis is over. Low wages in the public sector have led to a decline in applications for jobs in the public service, as wages in the private sector are better, and this is one of the major strengths of the union in pressing its demands. There is a huge gap between the position of lower-paid civil servants and that of the upper echelons of the civil service, judges, and politicians, who have secured increases of 15 to 33 per cent.

As the economy and economic activity has grown, public sector workers and low-paid workers in general find themselves falling behind as spiralling house prices, child care costs and inflation have eroded living standards. The battle for the future of the trade union movement is hotting up.

“The principle I state, and mean to stand upon, is this, that the entire ownership of Ireland, moral and material, up to the sun, and down to the centre, is vested of right in the people of Ireland.”—James Fintan Lalor (1848).

# International Connolly Conference

**A MAJOR assessment of the political legacy of James Connolly will take place in Dublin over the weekend of 21–22 April. The conference, organised by the James Connolly Education Trust, has drawn support from a wide spectrum of political opinion.**



Eddie Glackin; Liz Curtis; Mary Cullen; Don Mullan; and Robert Ballagh.

The conference will debate a number of themes, including

- The politics of James Connolly
- Connolly's challenge to today's labour movement
- Connolly and issues of contemporary Marxism
- Is Connolly's socialism feasible today?

The list of speakers includes Dr Priscilla Metscher, author of *Republicanism and Socialism in Ireland*

and numerous articles and papers on Connolly. Her new book, *James Connolly and the Reconquest of Ireland*, will be published shortly in the United States. Her husband, Prof. Thomas Metscher, will speak on "Connolly and the future of Marxism". He is the author of numerous books and essays on German, English and Hiberno-English literature, cultural and aesthetic theory and problems of politics and ideology and is a member of the Communist Party of Germany.

Michael O'Reilly of the ATGWU and Jack O'Connor will take part in an important debate on Connolly's challenge to today's labour movement, a debate that will be of importance to all those who are concerned about the future of the labour movement. On Sunday afternoon there will be a panel discussion, with representatives of Sinn Féin, the Labour Party, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party invited to take part.

The conference will open at 11:00 on the Saturday morning in the New Theatre, 43 East Essex Street (Temple Bar), Dublin 2 (behind Connolly Books).

For further information contact [connollyconference@eircom.net](mailto:connollyconference@eircom.net).

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## Proposed bye-laws an attack on democracy

**THE proposed changes by Dublin Corporation to the bye-laws for O'Connell Street are a fundamental attack on democracy and the democratic right to protest and to express opinions in an open, public way.**

The bye-laws, if they are allowed to go through, would require the following:

- Thirty-one days' notice of assemblies of more than six people.
- A deposit of £2,000 for assemblies of more than fifty people (the deposit to be refunded after fourteen days if there is no damage to public property).
- Insurance to the value of £3 million.
- The organisers to apply for an event licence.
- Groups of over three hundred people to present "event management plans" and proof of insurance indemnity.
- No assemblies after 11:00 p.m.
- Ground noise level not to exceed 10 dB over a fifteen-minute period relative to prevailing traffic noise.

Under the guise of the "O'Connell Street Integrated Area Plan", Dublin Corporation has launched a fundamental attack on democratic rights, not just for those who live and work in Dublin but also to the whole citizenry of this country, as O'Connell Street has always been the focal point for protests by workers, farmers, community, peace, women's and religious groups.

Dublin Corporation has called for submissions from interested members of the public, with a deadline of thirty days. This so-called public consultation is a joke and a pure

publicity stunt. These new bye-laws have come as a result of the continuous campaign by the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, City Centre Business Association, and other business interests. All these organisations have been attacking the right to assemble for years, claiming that protests affect business and trade. In fact traffic congestion causes more problems than protests.

The number of protests in O'Connell Street is very small. The majority are no more than a thousand people (if only we could get larger numbers!); it is only at a time of heightened political or industrial struggle that there are large gatherings. The amount of disruption is minimal. Like increasing areas of our life and society, what is good for business—the minority—gets priority and takes precedence over the interests of the majority of working people. And if Dublin Corporation gets away with this, then other cities and towns will follow.

*This attack must be met head on.* The Corpo's consultation process is a farce; there can be no compromise with this attack on civil rights. Eternal vigilance is the price of democratic rights. We need now to set up a Citizens' Initiative for Democratic Protest. It is urgent that democratic opinion is mobilised to block this anti-democratic move.

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